

SHEEP'S RUN – 99 RUMSON ROAD

Early History of the Property 1665-1917 In 1665, John Hance was one of the settlers who negotiated with the Navesink Indians of the Lenni Lenape Tribe to purchase the lands of this peninsula and the immediate surroundings through the Monmouth Patent. River-to-river estates were carved out of the purchase, and John Hance was rewarded with a parcel of 500 acres that went from west of Bingham Avenue to Bellevue Avenue from the North Shrewsbury (now the Navesink River) to the South Shrewsbury Rivers.

A farmer, local magistrate, deputy and justice, John began a tradition that lasted for at least 200 years as the Hance family grew and thrived on their farms. Parts of the estate were broken off as family members started out on their own, and the 1860 Monmouth County map shows no fewer than five homes along the Rumson Road listed as being owned by members of the Hance family.

As years passed, sections of land were sold, and the last of the Hance family's Rumson farm properties was sold around 1890. Summer visitors began building "gentleman's farms" along Rumson Road, and what is now Riverfields was carved out of what had been the Hance farm and, later, the Richard Borden farm. It was a parcel that went all of the way to the southern portion of Bingham Avenue, which was often referred to as Parmly's Road on deeds because of its location on the western border of the Parmly Farm.



Around 1915, as World War I was raging in Europe, New York City's social life went on, and those New Yorkers who spent their summers and holidays at the New Jersey shore continued to rent and purchase Rumson estates for their summer homes. New York residents Thomas and Elizabeth Vietor were looking for a summer residence in Rumson near Mr. Vietor's parents, Mr. and Mrs. George F. Vietor, who had summered across Rumson Road from the Seabright Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club since 1892. (That home was demolished in the 1940s.) Mrs. George F. Vietor was Anna, a sister of Fritz Achelis.

The Vietor and Achelis families were blended by their family business and by intermarriage. The Achelis family had purchased what is now Riverfields on Rumson Road in 1888 from Stanley H. Renton of New York and spent the warm

weather months on their 28-acre dairy farm while taking part in the sporting and social activities available to all of "The Cottagers" who came here from New York. They purchased more property, and Riverfields eventually grew to a 49 acre estate. Brothers-in-law Frederick (Fritz) Achelis and George F. Vietor were founding members of the Rumson Country Club in 1908, and George F. Vietor is listed on the Club's incorporation documents.

Frederick Vietor and Achelis, a wholesale dry goods and textile firm, had been inherited from their fathers and was run at this time by the two men and their sons. Fritz had other business involvements and was the President of the American Hard Rubber Company, which manufactured combs and bowling balls. The name of ACE combs came from a shortened version of his name. He was also involved in charity work and served as President of Lenox Hill Hospital. Fritz and his wife, Bertha, raised three children who grew up in New York and on the estate: Frederic G. Achelis, Margaret Vietor Sansome and Elizabeth A. Achelis.



Bertha Achelis, was listed in the *Woman's Who's Who of America* for her charity work in NYC where, among many other organizations, she was an officer of the New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. Here in Rumson, she was also very active and was responsible for raising the funds to build the rectory at the new Saint George's-by-the-River Church after its dedication in 1908. Fritz and Bertha collected fine art, and they loaned their Rembrandt drawings to the Metropolitan Museum for display in 1918. The Fritz Achelis Memorial Collection at the Yale University Art Gallery was begun in 1925, a year after his father's passing, by Fritz's son, Frederic George Achelis. The gift of around 150 old master prints formally established the Print Room of the museum. Among the art works were two engravings by Albrecht Durer, and an etching by Rembrandt. Some of these treasures may have hung in their Riverfields home on Rumson Road at the turn of the last century.

The Mansion is Built 1917-1918 On January 23, 1917, Fritz and Bertha sold a 13-acre parcel on the corner of Rumson Road and Bingham Avenue to George and Annie's son, their nephew Thomas F. Vietor, and his wife,

Elizabeth Allen Vietor, a descendant of Revolutionary War hero Ethan Allen and daughter of Oliver Allen, an industrial magnate of Rochester, NY. Thomas and Elizabeth had been married since 1913, and their young family was growing. They were looking for a home that would provide them with a retreat from the City where there was plenty of room to raise their children and entertain their family and friends. The parcel of land ended at what was the back drive to Riverfields and is now Pompano Road.



This beautiful child is Elizabeth Bacon Allen. She grew up and married Thomas F. Vietor and became the first owner of 99 Rumson Road.

The Vietors hired Harrie T. Lindeberg, a New York City architect who had trained in the offices of McKim, Meade and White. As time went on, he became well known as a designer of country houses. Commissions included a house in Pocantico hills for a member of the Rockefeller family and Shadowbrook, the estate of Dr. Ernest Fahnestock in Shrewsbury, which was begun in mid-1909. Architect and architectural historian Mark Alan Hewitt, who wrote the introduction for *Domestic Architecture of H. T. Lindeberg*, described Lindeberg as having a genius for "architecture that combined the sentimental associations of historical types with a strong, austere quality of mass, materiality and proportion." He praised Lindeberg's "understated quality and elegance that created homes that are adaptable to the tastes of today enabling them to endure and thus escape the wrecking ball."

When completed in early 1918*, the 200-foot long mansion held 27 rooms with 10 tiled bathrooms. The English Tudor style was similar to many of the great houses in England. Heavy slate pieces some weighing more than 175 pounds were imported from Wales along with the skilled workers to put them into place on the steeply pitched roof. This type of roof was so much a Lindeberg trademark that the style came to be known as a "Lindeberg roof." The peak of the house reaches 56 feet making what is now Sheep's Run one of the tallest houses in Rumson. The style of slate placement was called "drunken shakes" for its seemingly haphazard arrangement. The roof is said to have a life expectancy of 300 years and hasn't yet reached the point of being one third of the way through its effective life.

The house was situated in order to make the best use of natural light, and the servants' wings were put on the east side of the house so that they would have the morning light as they went about their jobs. The ceilings were 12 feet high, and elaborate woodwork was generously incorporated to decorate the thick masonry walls. Mrs. Vietor is said to have had difficulty making a decision when presented with three styles of balusters for the main staircase. Only after close inspection can the observer see that all three choices were created and installed in an alternating pattern because she was unable to choose among them. A 40-foot long living room has a tall fireplace with elaborate bronze work across the mantel. There are eight fireplaces, and they are all different. Moravian tiles from Pennsylvania were used decoratively. The original heating featured radiators located under the flooring as an early form of radiant heating. Graceful arches were made to form entries to some areas.

In this age that predated air conditioning, measures were taken to take advantage of cool breezes, and bedchambers had two doors – one regular wooden door as well as a 'summer door' with slats to allow the air to circulate. High up on the bedroom walls were glass windows that could be opened out into the halls on hot nights. Some bedrooms had summer porches attached providing a door that could be left open or, if it was dreadfully hot, an opportunity to sleep outside of the stifling rooms. Bedroom doors were provided with door-knockers that were designed so that each had a different bird motif. Two trunk rooms known as California closets held the luggage and trunks of family and guests when they arrived for summer visits. When the house was shut up for the winter, huge hurricane shutters were placed over all of the windows. How lonely Rumson Road must have seemed during the winter when all of the grand homes were shut up so tightly.

The house was built of stone and steel to be fireproof, and there were fire fighting stations set up behind paneling at various locations. The most recent owners replaced the crumbling fire hoses with those found at the demolition sale of an old Asbury Park hotel. The kitchen had a gallery ceiling to allow the cooking heat to rise.

Mr. Lindeberg engaged Oscar B. Bach to design ornamental metalwork for the Vietor home, and the artist created bronze grillwork featuring birds with sweeping plumes and other distinctive pieces that are still stunningly beautiful today. Oscar B. Bach was born in Breslau and emigrated to America in 1913. Although he painted and etched, his fame came from his sculpture and decorative work. He worked on many houses with Mr. Lindeberg, and he did an outdoor grill, fireplaces and exquisite grills for the windows of the Vietor home. Mr. Bach also made small items such as

lamps, candlesticks, sculptures and ashtrays, and they often appear for sale on E-bay.

The Vietor Family 1917-1927 Gatherings both large and small characterized the Vietor lifestyle. The names of the extended family of Thomas and Elizabeth appear in the newspaper as being in attendance at the two week long International Polo Tournament. During the second week of the tournament, on September 4, 1922, the Vietors were mentioned in the New York Times with a description of an event where they entertained, "the members of all of the polo teams, the Polo Committee and friends and guests in the Rumson sections" at a luncheon at "their residence on the Rumson Road." The invitees totaled 140 people who dined at the Vietor home that day. The Vietors also regularly entertained their large family for Sunday dinners and other enjoyable events.

Mr. Vietor's brother, Dr. John A. Vietor, and his wife, the former Eleanore Emily Woodward, also purchased a Rumson home. They have appeared in Rumson history before as the owners of The Point who didn't like the mansion that was on the property. They moved another into its place on the estate that comprised what is now Oyster Bay Drive and Avenue of Two Rivers South. The original house was moved up the road about a mile and has been standing at 121 Avenue of Two Rivers since the 1920s. The house that they moved onto the estate was moved again about 25 years later and is now the Clubhouse of the Rumson Country Club.

The Vietors had four children, at least two of whom were born while the family owned what is now Sheep's Run. Mary Anne Vietor married George Arthur, jr. and lived in Greenwich, CT. Thomas, Jr. graduated from Princeton in 1938 and married Carolyn Raymond the following year. He lived in New York and summered on Long Island. Miss Alice C. Vietor was the youngest; she never married and lived in New York City. Oliver Allen Vietor was the only family member to retain life-long ties to Rumson. He graduated from Princeton with honors in the Class of 1941 and was the President of Colonial Club. He married Dorothy Krueger Burghard from Fair Haven and served in World War II before returning to Rumson, where he and Dorothy raised their family. He commuted to Princeton for his position in the publishing business and continued his connection with the University by serving as president of his class, which gave him the chairmanship of the 10th and 25th year book committees. After retiring from business, he and his wife moved to Dorset, Vermont.

During the mid-1920's, the entire family began to spend the summers in Southampton on Long Island, and they sold their Rumson estates. After only

a few years here, Dr. John Vietor and his wife sold The Point to Edward Scudder, and Thomas and Elizabeth Vietor had enjoyed their beautiful mansion for less than ten years when they sold it to Henry E. Butler and Eleanor Mason Butler in 1927. Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Achelis died within three years of one another: Bertha died in 1921, and her husband died in 1924. Perhaps the deaths of the older generation freed the younger family members from summering near their parents and allowed them to choose their own vacation havens. In September of 1926, the Achelis family sold three parcels of land that totaled close to 50 acres to William H. LaBoyteaux who raised cattle on the estate until five years later when he outgrew Riverfields and moved to a large property on Sycamore Avenue near the railroad tracks in Shrewsbury. Eventually, he ended up with a huge holding, Hop Brook Farm, in Holmdel.

Henry E. Butler and Family 1927-1934 Henry E. Butler (1876-1947) was a descendant of Jay Cooke, well known Civil War financier. A Yale graduate in the Class of 1898, he entered the financial world in the Philadelphia offices of Charles D. Barney & Co., precursor of Smith, Barney & Co. He moved to the firm's New York City offices and, in 1905, became a member of the New York Stock Exchange. He was a senior partner of Smith Barney & Co. when he began to summer here in Rumson. His wife, Eleanor Mason Butler (1881-1950), came from Thomasville, Georgia, a fashionable mountain retreat, and the family also spent time there at her family's plantation. They appear in the New York Times business and society pages of the 1920's, and each appearance connects them to a different Rumson residence or property. In 1922, Mr. Butler sold a building lot on what was called Parkway in Rumson Park and is now Buttonwood Lane, and he also purchased a 3 1/3-acre furnished "summer residence" on the southeast corner of Rumson Road and Navesink Avenue that included a two acre 'tract of woodland' on the west side of Navesink Avenue. One summer home was described as being "at the junction of the Rumson Drive and the Avenue of Two Rivers," and this was the setting for the marriage of their daughter, Heywood Mason Butler, to Darwin P. Kingsley, Jr., member of the Charles D. Barney & Co. firm, in June of 1926. In August of 1924, Mr. Butler purchased 42 acres on the "the south side of Rumson Road fronting on Rumson Road 537 feet, on Bingham Avenue nearly 3,000 feet and on South Shrewsbury River about 800 feet." The purchase price was \$30,000! This property was on the other side of Bingham Avenue from what is now Sheep's Run, but there is no evidence that he lived on that property. Perhaps Mr. Butler was doing some land speculating, a practice that seems to have been prevalent in the area then and has endured into the present.

On December 3, 1927, Henry and Eleanor Mason Butler purchased the

estate that is now called Sheep's Run and set about obtaining all of the property between what is now Pompano Road and the Shrewsbury River. The Butlers loved boats and boat racing, and they wanted waterfront property. Through three separate purchases, the estate was expanded to the South Shrewsbury River by the summer of 1931. At the same time, Henry E. Butler was putting together five separate parcels of land along Schank Road in what was called Pleasant Valley in Holmdel to amass a farm of more than 250 acres. The largest parcel of land was purchased from Hendrick P. Conover, and it had a residence dating to 1700, a barn built around 1820 and many other barns and structures. After her marriage several years later, Mr. Butler constructed a stone and steel mansion on that farm for his daughter. Livestock and farm equipment were included, and the land was under cultivation when purchased.

On April 2, 1928, Alice Eleanor Butler married Clement Clay Crawford, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harden Crawford of New York and Rumson at the family home on Rumson Road. Clay Crawford worked for the CIA, and he and Alice moved to Taos, New Mexico and started a golf course after his retirement. Jeanette Molzer, granddaughter of the Harden Crawfords remembers visiting the Butler family at their home on Rumson Road and recalls them as warm and gracious people whose Southern roots were evident in their hospitality and kindness. The entire family called them Namu and Papa.

In September 2, 1933, there was a wedding in the mansion that is now Sheep's Run when Saranne married Marshall Geer of Short Hills. Mr. Geer had graduated from Princeton that year. The couple lived on the Holmdel farm until 1946.

The Butlers were living at their Rumson Road mansion when the Stock Market crashed in 1929. Mrs. Molzer remembers her mother telling her that Henry E. Butler "almost single-handedly saved Smith Barney from 'going under' in 1929." In a news clipping from November 1, 1931, the news was about the Sandy Hook, one of the fleet of steamboats that annually took over 300,000 summer visitors back and forth between New York and the Jersey Shore. The ship had 24 staterooms that were "rented by the season to Wall Street brokers who wanted comfort on their trips back and forth." The Sandy Hook had been awaiting repainting and repairs at her pier in Jersey City when she caught fire and burned. At the end of the article was a listing: "many prominent names are associated with the record of the Sandy Hook as passengers." Henry E. Butler was one of the eight names presented.

Because of his interest in boat racing and the presence of the Red Bank Sweepstakes Regatta on the North Shrewsbury River (now the Navesink

River), Henry E. Butler sold his Rumson estate in order to move to a Fair Haven waterfront location. In May of 1935, he purchased the 3 ½-acre estate on the west side of Grange Avenue that gave him 450' on the North Shrewsbury River with a view to Red Bank that would put him right in the middle of everything for the Regattas. He named the estate Shipahoy and planned to put steel bulkheading along the riverfront of his new year-round home. During that year, he was selected as an honorary judge for the Sweepstakes Regatta and gave a luncheon party on the lawn at that home to watch the National Sweepstakes Regatta for motor boats and outboards. In March of 1940, through a trade with Mrs. Frederick Burghard**, he moved to a larger estate, which he named Hard-a-Lee, on the east side of Hance Road, also directly on the river. That summer he entertained a hundred guests for luncheon on the lawn to watch the Regatta. When he died in March of 1947, he was only 60 years old.

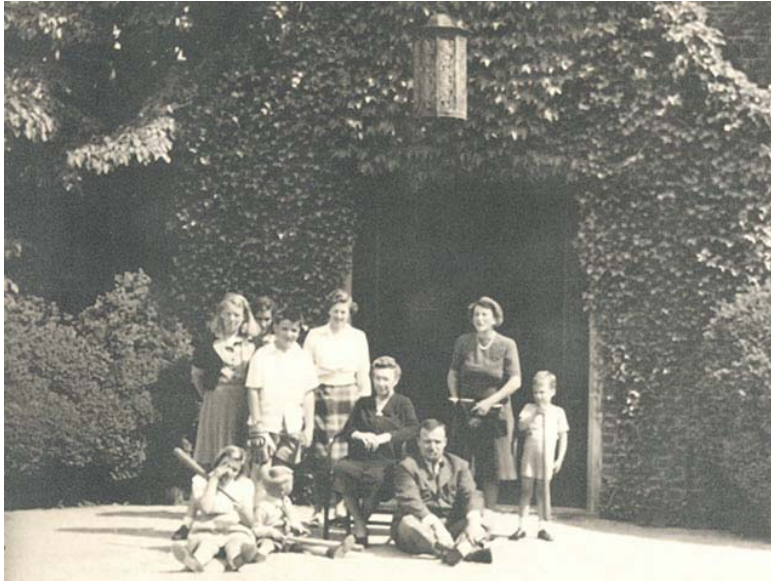
Mrs. Henry I. Riker's Linden Crest Home 1934-1947 On May 31, 1934, Eleanor Mason Butler and Henry E. Butler sold 99 Rumson Road and all of the property stretching to the South Shrewsbury River to Mary J. Riker, widow of Henry Ingersoll Riker. Mrs. Riker lived in New York City at 9 East 72nd Street and had previously summered in Seabright in a home that is no longer in existence, but The Cove restaurant is located in what had been the Riker carriage house. Mary Riker was a daughter of John Lawrence Riker (1830-1909), whose obituary said that "he came of one of the old Knickerbocker families, whose history has been bound up with New York's from its foundation." It went on to trace his heritage to Hans von Rycken, who took part in the first Crusade. Also mentioned was the family support of William the Silent as he tried to resist the Spanish rule over Holland; this loyalty caused the loss of the family fortune and was the impetus behind the emigration of some of the von Ryckens to America in 1638. They established a business at Broad and Beaver Streets and had farms in the settlement of Nieuw Amsterdam. Riker's Island was one of their farms and remained in their family until purchased by the City in 1845. One of nine children, Mary Jackson Riker married her cousin, Henry Ingersoll Riker, a veteran of the Spanish American War and member of the Harvard Class of 1893, in 1903 at the Church of the Incarnation with a reception at her New York City home. They became the parents of two sons, John L. Riker and Henry I. Riker, Jr. and his twin sister, who was also called Mary Jackson Riker. In 1908, Henry I. Riker was a founding member of the Rumson Country Club. A look through the society pages of the early years of the 20th Century shows many listings of the Rikers at sporting and social events both in New York and here on the Shore. Mary Riker was a highly skilled bridge player and had played the

game with some of its biggest names including Charles Goren. Sadly, Henry Ingersoll Riker died suddenly of pneumonia after only a few days of illness on November 15, 1927. He was 55 years old at the time of his passing.



This sketch was on Mrs. Riker's note cards. It shows how long the house was (about 200') before the two eastern sections were removed.

It was only a few years later that Mary Riker purchased her Rumson Road home, which was called Linden Crest during her years there. She was fortunate that her family had a long history in this area, and many of her siblings and their families were nearby. Her sister Margaret was Mrs. J. Amory Haskell, a well known collector of early American antiques, who lived at Oak Hill Farm, a 625-acre estate on Cooper Road, and her brother Samuel, was a New York attorney whose summer home is now the Navesink Country Club clubhouse. Her brother Charles Lawrence Riker and his wife, Selina, had their summer home on Ward Avenue across the street from the Church of the Holy Cross. Mrs. Riker continued to attend events here and was frequently listed as being a participant at charity functions and sporting events. When her daughter was married in April of 1930 to William C. Riker, the ceremony took place at the same church where her parents were married, and the reception was held at the Riker home on 72nd Street. Mrs. Riker was a box holder at the Monmouth County Horse Show in July of 1936. In May of 1940, she suffered another dreadful loss when Henry I. Riker, Jr., who had spent his summers here with her, passed away.



The Riker family done between 1943 and 1944. Mrs. Riker seated in the middle surrounded by her children and grandchildren.

During World War II, Mrs. Riker's grandson, Bill, was an infant and considered to be at risk when his father, William C. Riker, was stationed in Florida where tropical diseases were a real issue. He was left with his grandmother while

his mother and older sisters stayed at the naval station where the ship his father commanded was based. Later, his father was transferred to a ship in the Pacific, and his mother and three older sisters returned to their own Rumson home to await his return. During the war, Mrs. Riker's son, Dr. John L. Riker, served the Borough of Rumson as the Chairman of the Rumson Emergency Medical Service, a part of the Rumson Defense Council, before he began his own military service.

In 1947, Mrs. Mary J. Riker died, and her family put her Rumson Road estate up for sale. It was difficult to sell large properties at that time just after the war, and Linden Crest stretched from Rumson Road all of the way to the river. Anyone with a lot of cash could pick up one of these big estates at a bargain price, and that is just what Meador Wright was able to do. Mrs. Riker died in 1947, and the property was not sold until February of 1950. It had taken a long time to sell the estate, and the price had come down. Mr. Wright got "the deal of the century" and purchased all of the property from Rumson Road to the Shrewsbury River with a mansion and outbuildings for \$40,000.

The House Divided 1950-1954 Meador Wright was a 1930 graduate of Columbia University, and he wasn't waiting around to make his mark. Right after graduation, he ran in the primary election for the Republican Congressional Nomination in the Ninth District as a Pro-Prohibition candidate. He lost and also seems to have lost his interest in running for public office. Mr. Wright lived in Orange, NJ with his wife, Mildred, when he purchased Mrs. Riker's estate. He was the Editor of *Suburban Life*, a magazine devoted to society events and stories about NJ. He had no intention of relocating to the beautiful property in Rumson. Linden Crest was

no longer considered a home; it was a business investment. The only use he made of the house was as a venue for the society debut of his daughter. Once that event was done, he broke the estate apart and sold it piece by piece.



This shows the house in the process of having the eastern section(s) removed.

In 1952, he divided the mansion itself and removed a large wing, which he split into two separate houses and moved onto lots that he had created along Bingham Avenue. The wing was the servants' section of the building, and the newly created residences kept traces of their former utilitarian purposes. The Dey family purchased the house closest to Rumson Road in 1956; they were the second family to live there coming after a short term ownership by the Richards family.

Deanne Dey remembers a lot about the estate and the houses on the property. Her dining room had been the staff dining room, and her bedrooms had been servants' quarters, each room with its own sink. She had a balcony off her bedroom. The house that was made from the other section of the wing had a room that had served as the laundry-drying and ironing room. It had a cathedral ceiling, and there were drying racks built into the walls. The kitchen was in the wing that was removed, and the main house was left without one. A kitchen only slightly larger than would be found in a small house was created adjoining the dining room in the former butler's pantry,

but it was not large enough to do entertaining on the grand scale that was once the custom in this old mansion that had once hosted 140 for lunch during the Polo Championship.

The barn that faced the back drive of the estate, now Pompano Road, had an apartment on the second floor, but the first level still had stalls when it was sold. Deanne remembers it as being called "the foal barn." That has been converted into the home that has the arbor running along the side from its Bingham Avenue garage to the house. Deanne has vivid memories of Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, caretakers who lived in an apartment at the eastern end of the main house. They are remembered as having been elderly in the 1950's, and Deanne says that they were very nice. She believes that it was Mr. Robinson who told her that at one time there were 33 servants on the estate. Deanne remembers walking her babies over to Riverfields to see the cows and turkeys that were being raised there. She also remembers that in the late 1950's there were still farmlands with cows out grazing across Bingham Avenue on the east side of the street.

The Fitzsimmons Family 1954-1959 In December of 1954, Meador Wright sold what remained of the estate, after it had been reduced to six acres and the mansion had been divided, to James F. and Eleanor Fitzsimmons. Their son, James B. Fitzsimmons, was about 14 years old and a student at Lawrenceville. His father had a business in New York, and the family had a fondness for the Jersey Shore. Theirs was the first family to live in this home full time. Mr. Fitzsimmons remembers it as a great house for parties, and the family entertained frequently, particularly enjoying the terrace off the living room. Jim's room was on the west end of the third floor. He remembers exploring all sorts of nooks and crannies by crawling through closets and compartments in the third floor rooms that led to attic areas and to areas inside the very thick walls. He also set up a firing range in the basement where he enjoyed target practice.



The house when the Fitzsimmons family lived there. You have to love those old Caddys!

Coincidentally, Jim Fitzsimmons was a classmate of Mrs. Riker's grandson, Bill Riker, at their New York elementary school. They never met again until their 40th Reunion where they realized that they both shared memories

of the same Rumson home. After Jim left for Columbia University, he spent very little time at his parents' home. With Jim grown up, the mansion was becoming very large for just two people. Another factor was the difficulty of finding household help. Jim remembers that his mother went to the Red Bank train station to pick up a household employee who had been recommended by a New York agency. When they pulled into the front driveway, the lady saw the size of the house and demanded to be taken back to the train! Mr. and Mrs. Fitzsimmons sold the house in 1959 to Robert and Mary Skold and moved to a home across the street from the beach in Deal.

Poolie, the dog who came with the house An interesting piece of this story is "the dog who came with the house." Jim Fitzsimmons remembers a Belgian Shepherd called "Poolie" (sp?) who literally "came with the house." He was there when the Fitzsimmons family arrived. He had a big tail that he carried up and curled forward. Poolie was trained to protect the house and property and took his duty seriously. Normally a loving family pet who had full access to the entire house, he went on alert when any living creature came onto the property. When guests were expected at the Fitzsimmons home, they were warned to toot their car horns out in the driveway. The family had to meet them outside and properly introduce them to Poolie. Once he met them and knew that they were acceptable to the family, he would be friendly; without the introduction, the people would not have made it to the front door. Any animals who came onto the grounds were chased to the property line. He always stopped short at the line and didn't leave the estate...other than when he raided the Riverfields pond for unsuspecting ducks. Jim remembers sitting in the loggia enjoying a lovely spring day in that light and airy sunroom when Poolie arrived and presented his prey. He was expecting praise and was quite unsettled when Jim got a shovel and buried the poor duck.



Poolie, the dog who came with the house.

When the Fitzsimmons sold 99 Rumson Road, Jim remembers feeling very sad, "I don't know if I regretted leaving the house or leaving Poolie more." But, they did leave him behind because they thought that he "came with the house" and would never be happy elsewhere. Jim remembers Poolie sitting in front of the house watching them pull away, oblivious to the

changes about to happen "on his turf." He was a fairly young dog at the time, and it has been a mystery trying to learn his fate. Mary Skold and her husband purchased the home from the Fitzsimmons, and she doesn't remember a big dog on the property. Her children were young, and they brought their own dog to live in their new home. Former neighbor Deanne Dey has memories of a dog house and pen and a big dog there, so perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, the caretakers, kept Poolie but kept him confined. This would have been a major lifestyle change for a guard dog who had been trained to be a living security system for this property. Jim Fitzsimmons said that his family would have taken Poolie if they had known that his life was to change so drastically. The owners after the Skolds were serious dog lovers, and, if a dog had been there when they purchased the property, he would have, once again, been a family pet. But, the Christiansons did not find a dog when they took over the house. What happened to Poolie? In point of fact, where did he come from? Who brought him to the property, and who trained him?

The Skold Family 1959-1961 Mary and Robert Skold purchased the house in May of 1959, and they made it a year-round family home. They had two very young children, and their third child was born in 1960 during their time there. Their oldest went to Rumson Country Day School, and the family was active at Tower Hill Church. Mr. Skold was a mortgage banker and commuted to Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company in Newark. He was a trustee of the Camp Meeting Association in Ocean Grove and loved the distinctive architecture of that small enclave of Victorian gems. One house in particular was on the market for sale and in danger of demolition, and the Skolds purchased it and presented it to the town association. Their gift started a movement of preservation in the old neighborhoods of Ocean Grove, and their gift of Centennial Cottage is still appreciated by visitors to that quaint community.

Mrs. Skold remembers the dining room set at 99 Rumson Road that provided seating for 24 people with an extra large table and matching built in servers against the walls. She said that it, as well as the gardener and the farm sized tractor "came with the house." She was told that the dining room furniture had been designed for the room. This is another mystery. Mrs. Skold remembers that it was in the house when she arrived, and Jim Fitzsimmons remembers it. The last owner to live in the house before Jim's family was Mrs. Riker, and her family strongly claims that it was NOT in the house during her time there. The same dining room set was also used by the most recent occupants for nearly 50 years, and they don't know its history. Did Mrs. Riker find the set when she purchased the house and have it stored in an outbuilding because it was not to her taste? Did Meador Wright

decorate the dining room for his daughter's debut and add furniture too large to take to his home in Orange? Does the furniture date back to the earliest owners of the house, or was it purchased in 1950?

Mrs. Skold said that she "loved living in that gorgeous home" but that they didn't entertain often or have elaborate parties... with one major exception. They allowed their niece to have the Monmouth College Senior Prom at their home. That night the terraces and the living and dining rooms were filled with young people celebrating their college graduation in a most opulent setting.

The Long Term Owners: The Christianson Family 1961-2007 After slightly more than two years here in Rumson, the Skolds relocated back to York, PA, where they had family ties that were calling them home. They sold their home to Lloyd Christianson and his wife Sergie in July of 1961. The Christiansons had a "love at first sight" experience when they saw 99 Rumson Road and submitted a bid on the day that they first saw the house. They had four children, Lloyd, George, Charles and Sergie Ann, who enjoyed their life in the house both in their youth and later as they returned with their own children to what George Christianson calls, "a center for expanded family and grandchildren." Sergie Ann Christianson Conklin remembers that an interior designer "went to work on the living room and the front hall, whose walls had not been touched since before 1920. Previous owners had refurbished the library, powder room and dining room on the main floor and updated one bath on the second floor. All of the other baths were in their original condition."



The Christianson home in Rumson

Lloyd Christianson was a self-made man, a midwestern minister's son who graduated from the University of Kansas in 1935 and married Sergie in the same year. After being in the ROTC in college, he entered the military in the Army Engineer Corps, and wrote technical manuals on the

photomicroscopy of salt in petroleum as part of his work. The Army sent him to MIT to their Electrical Engineering program. He served in the military during the war and, his life was saved by John F. Kennedy on a PT Boat in Panama. Mr. Christianson worked on the development of radar that was being done in this area. He began his own company after the war and his discharge from the military. In order to get the business started, he sold the family car and sold shares in the company at \$1.00 a share. He bought three Army surplus vehicles, and they were used as the company began to flourish. This endeavor grew to be Electronic Associates, Inc., and he served as its president and CEO. EAI was a supplier of electronic equipment that grew to become a worldwide corporation and perhaps the first American computer company. In 1963, they were described by the Securities and Exchange Commission as "a company engaging in the development, production and sale of electronic analog computers and related equipment, integrated hybrid analog digital computers, precision electronic plotting equipment and laboratory instruments. It also furnishes computer engineering services involving problem analysis and solution." The year was 1963, and Mr. Christianson's company was well ahead of the curve.

The Rumson Road home became a place where Mr. Christianson could entertain his business associates and customers as well as those with whom he served on many local Boards. He was a bank director and also served on the boards of the Monmouth Council of Boy Scouts and the YMCA. He served as a trustee of Monmouth University and was named a Life Trustee Emeritus for his involvement that began when the school was getting started and continued for more than 47 years. One of his major accomplishments was his pivotal role in securing the property that became the Monmouth University campus. He was also a member of the Monmouth County Vocational Board of Education. He was a long time member of the Rotary Club of Long Branch and remained active beyond his 90th birthday.

George Christianson describes his parents as having had "a togetherness that had no limits of accomplishment." They loved their family, their animals and their home. They felt that it was their 'charge' to bring their mansion back from the state of age related disrepair in which they found it and to maintain it for the future. Their aim was not to make any major changes; they simply wanted to preserve it for the future. To this end, Mr. Christianson did a preponderance of the work himself. He operated the big farm tractor that "came with the house" and also a smaller one and cut the grass himself. His grandson Chris Park remembers him "sneaking out with his walker and climbing on board when no one was watching. All I could do was to get on the other tractor to join him and at least make the job go faster." Mr. Christianson was 90 years old at the time! Chris also remembers

helping GPa with house repairs and maintenance that were a continued fact of life in a home that was on the way to a one hundredth anniversary. When parts were not available for old faucets, Mr. Christianson worked on a lathe in the basement to fashion his own metal pieces, and they worked just fine.

One of the favorite family stories was related to them by Mr. Christianson, and the veracity is not completely verifiable. Mr. Christianson gleefully told the tale of being on his big tractor and cutting the grass out in the front yard near Rumson Road. Someone stopped to ask directions. Before leaving, the man commented that the lawn was looking quite nice and asked what the owners had to pay to have someone do such a great job on their property. Mr. Christianson answered, "Nothing, but sometimes they let me sleep with the Missus!" True or not, he loved telling the story.

All holidays were celebrated in great style at this home that saw children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the Christianson family grow up during their 46 years there. The family thought of trying to keep the house in the family after Lloyd Christianson passed away in 2007, but they decided that this beautiful home steeped in so much memory and tradition should not return to the status of "summer vacation and part-time residence." They hoped that the property would remain intact and that the house would be well cared for into the future.

The Mulheren Family 2007- Since purchasing the estate in 2007, the Mulheren family has been fulfilling those wishes and giving this wonderful old mansion the revitalization that it so richly deserves after its generations of nurturing the families who had the good fortune to spend their lives within its walls. After the work that has been done in the past year, Sheep's Run is in 'like new' condition and ready to nurture many more generations.

The VNA Designer Showhouse: Stately Homes By-The-Sea



Four Rumson designers among those participating in the Sheep's Run Designer Show House. (L to r) Diane Romanowski, Kathy Taylor, Kathleen Donnelly, and Mary Connell Gaynor.

Thanks to the generosity of the Mulheren family, the Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey has been given the opportunity to have a designer showcase in this grand mansion. Designers from as far away as California have come to Rumson to transform their small pieces of Sheep's Run into showcases of their expertise and technical excellence. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to visit a home that exemplifies the lifestyle once lived in this community as our "Cottagers" came down on the steamboats from their New York homes to enjoy their summers here in Rumson.

The VNA Stately-Homes-by-the-Sea Designer Show House will be open to view from April 28 through May 31. All funds raised by the event will be used by the Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey to provide care for local people who need its services. For more information, go online to: www.statelyhomesbythesea.com, or call 732-224-6791.

Sources: *History of Rumson 1665-1944 Rumson: Shaping a Superlative Suburb*, Randall Gabriellan *New York Times* Archives *Red Bank Register* Archives *SEC News Digest*, August 5, 1963 Mark Alan Hewitt on www.statelyhomesbythesea.com Many thanks to George Christianson, Deanne Dey, James B. Fitzsimmons, Susan Kline, Susanne Vietor Lawrence, Jeanette Molzer, Chris and Cindi Park, Cornelia Riker Reiss, William Riker, Mary Skold, Michael Steinhorn, Bruce Van Vliet, and Lisa Wilson.